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UTILITY APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES PATENT
FOR
USER INTERFACE DEVICE FOR ELECTRONIC GAME USING CARDS

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USER INTERFACE DEVICE FOR ELECTRONIC GAME USING CARDS

This invention generally relates to the field of electronic games, and in particular, a new user interface for card games, board games that use cards, etc., implemented using a program on a dedicated game console
5 or platform, or even on a personal computer.

In a general manner, current card games benefit very little from the technological advances made in the field of electronic games. Thus, currently there are, on the one hand, card games played using cardboard paper cards
10 that have the inconvenience of taking up space, and that there must be the same number of card sets than there are games (Bridge, Tarot, 7 Families, etc.,) and on the other, electronic card games on virtual screens that are mainly used with a mouse and, if necessary, an alphanumeric
15 keyboard.

Thus, the latter do not offer the user-friendliness that is offered by traditional card games.

The aim of this invention is to draw from among the advantages of electronic games, and, in particular, from
20 the possibility of having within a single dedicated machine, a large number of different electronic card

games, whilst obtaining the user-friendliness of paper card games.

To this end, the invention suggests, according to a first aspect, a personal interface portable device for electronic card games, characterised in that it includes
5 a thin display screen, a tactile detection faceplate superimposed on the screen, control circuits for acting on a card display using the screen that respond to the actions detected by the detection faceplate, and an
10 interface with a central system that can execute electronic games.

Some preferred, but optional, aspects of this device are the following:

- the screen and the faceplate have a concavity that
15 turns, during use, towards the user.
- the display screen and the detection faceplate are mounted on a handle.
- the handle houses the interface control circuits.
- the handle is equipped with a validation button of
20 a choice made in a tactile manner.
- the display screen and tactile faceplate have a general circular sector shape contour.
- the display screen and tactile faceplate have a general rectangular shape.

25 According to a second aspect, the invention suggests an electronic game system that can execute electronic card games, characterised in that it includes:

- a central system comprising of a display screen that can represent a game board, and
30 - a plurality of user interface devices such as those defined above, linked to the central system.

Other aspects, objectives, and advantages of this invention will become more evident upon reading the following detailed description of its preferred embodiments, given as a non-limiting example and making
5 reference to the attached diagrams, in which:

Figure 1 is a front view of a user interface device for electronic games according to a first embodiment of the invention.

Figure 2 is a bottom view of the device in Figure 1.

10 Figure 3 is a front view of a user interface device according to a second embodiment of the invention.

It can be noted initially that the invention is particularly applicable to an electronic game platform, such as the one described in document WO 02 20110 A, in
15 the same of the applicant, but that it can be applied also to other electronic game systems, in particular using a vertical screen (television, PC monitor.)

The electronic game platform described in document WO 02 20110 A includes a flat screen that can represent a
20 game board in which the game program can provoke the display of virtual cards extracted from their set by the respective users.

The invention suggests to this end an interface device that allows manipulating cards intuitively and in
25 a way that resembles the manipulation of traditional cards.

Thus, the device illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 include a thin screen 10 that incorporates a tactile function, according to the technologies known by
30 themselves.

Screen 10 is designed to display a card game deployed in the form of a fan, as in a traditional paper

card game, and the screen has here a corresponding shape, in the form of a circular sector with an extension, for example, of between 60 and 150 degrees. The tactile faceplate is incorporated into the screen on the display
5 side; that is, facing the user in the position of the user, so that the latter can select a card by fanning using a finger, or even moving the cards away from each other to organise the set.

Screen 10 is done, for example, using LCD, OLED, etc.
10 type technology.

Depending on the software of the game used, it can represent any type of card games, both existing and future.

As indicated in Figure 2, the screen has a concavity
15 turned towards the user to ensure the confidentiality of the game. Such a screen is done, for example, using versatile polymer luminescent display technologies.

The device also includes a handle 20 equipped with a validation push button 22 designed typically to extract
20 the selected card from the set and place it (display it) on the platform screen, or also, in certain types of games, to transfer the card to an identical device of another user.

Advantageously, handle 20 houses electronic control
25 circuits for the screen 10 and the tactile faceplate, as well as the circuits that interface with the central system (game platform or console, or even personal computer.)

The communication between the device and the central
30 system can be done by cable, infrared link, radio frequency link, etc.

Game programs executed on the central system are designed to ensure the exchanges necessary between said system and each of the devices according to the invention.

Figure 3 illustrates another embodiment of the invention where the display screen 10 equipped with the tactile faceplate has a rectangular shape. The displayed cards are in this case deployed linearly and not in a fan shape.

Several variants and modifications can be made to the invention.

In particular, it can be equipped with a device with one or several buttons (direction buttons, specific action buttons, start/stop buttons, etc.)

According to another variant, all or part of the buttons are implemented in dedicated areas of the tactile function screen, areas in which the related indicators are displayed.